



BACKGROUND

- City of Falls Church water is supplied by the **Washington Aqueduct** Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. They treat water drawn from the Potomac River and transmit it to the City of Falls Church where we distribute it to customers.
- Water provided by the Aqueduct **meets strict EPA standards for safe water.**
- **To ensure safe drinking water**, the City of Falls Church works with the Washington Aqueduct and our partners at DC Water and Sewer Authority and Arlington County to ensure that the treatment plants produce water in compliance with all existing regulations.
- The conversion to disinfection with chloramines in 2000 **significantly improved water quality** by reducing disinfection byproduct formation. Previously, water was treated with free chlorine all year.
- The City of Falls Church supports the call in the Environmental Working Group (EWG) report for **improved source water protection**. The City is a member of a partnership among the Metropolitan Washington area utilities, the EPA and the States in the Potomac Basin to improve water quality in the Potomac River – which supplies the region’s drinking water.
- EWG’s report on Washington, D.C.’s drinking water displays a **lack of understanding** of the current science on disinfection byproducts.
- EPA regulations for safe drinking water require measuring disinfection byproducts (Tri-halomethanes/Haloacetic Acids – “chlorine toxins” in the EWG report) by **averaging results over four quarters. The City of Falls Church is in full compliance** with this regulation.

City of Falls Church drinking water is safe and meets or surpasses all federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state safety standards. As always, if customers have special health concerns, they may want to consider extra precautions.

DID THE CHLORINE SPIKE IN SPRING, 2007 POSE A HEALTH THREAT?

- Any individual measurement may be higher than the four-quarter running average. The EPA has not established a numerical limit for **seasonal peaks**, which are influenced by the temperature of the water and other variables (e.g., organic matter in the source water).
- The regulations are designed to protect against **chronic exposure over a lifetime of drinking water.**
- The levels measured in the EWG report are within the expected range of levels.
- **High levels of disinfection byproducts** may be harmful, but City of Falls Church levels are **well below** the levels established by EPA to protect health.
- Follow-on scientific work has found that **disinfection byproducts are not associated with miscarriages.**
- **The City of Falls Church will continue to strictly comply with EPA regulations.**
- The Aqueduct is engaging nationally recognized consultants to evaluate **future treatment options** and is initiating treatment studies that will focus, among other things, on techniques and processes to reduce the organic matter that is transformed into disinfection byproducts.
- The Aqueduct also is studying the overall effects of **reducing the amount of chlorine** used. Any changes to current practice must consider the effects on microbial activity as well as the water chemistry.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Should I install carbon filters on my taps?

A. It is not necessary to install carbon filters on your taps.

Q. When was my water last tested and what levels were detected?

A. EPA regulations for safe drinking water require measuring disinfection byproducts by **averaging test results over four quarters**. Results are published in the annual consumer confidence water quality report. The 2007 report is available at:
www.fallschurchva.gov/government/adminservices/customerService/documents/2007WQR.pdf.

The most recent test results for THMs and HAA5 are listed below. **The City of Falls Church is in full compliance** with EPA standards.

	Trihalomethanes (THMs)	Haloacetic Acids (HAA5)
EPA's Maximum Contaminant Level (Highest 4-quarter average of sample results)	80 ppb	60 ppb
Falls Church distribution system results, 2006 (As reported in 2007 Consumer Confidence Report)	34 ppb	24 ppb
Falls Church distribution system results, most recent 4 quarters	35 ppb	24 ppb
Highest individual results from Falls Church distribution system monitoring in May 2007	43 ppb	33 ppb

ppb=parts per billion, or micrograms per liter

THMs and HAA5 are groups of chemicals that form along with other disinfection byproducts when chlorine or other disinfectants used to control microorganisms (such as viruses and bacteria) react with natural organic and inorganic matter in source water and distribution systems.

Q. When might there be higher levels of disinfection byproducts in the water?

A. A small, but brief, increase in the level of disinfection byproducts in the water may occur during the annual flushing program when the Washington Aqueduct water treatment plants temporarily switch their secondary disinfectant from chloramine (chlorine combined with ammonia) to free chlorine (chlorine in an uncombined state). The periodic switching of disinfectants is an industry practice typically accompanied by a water main flushing program of the entire distribution system in order to keep water mains clean and free from harmful bacteria. The annual flushing program generally lasts for 30 days.

For more information, call EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791 or visit the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/safewater.

For more information about the City's water system, customers can call 703-248-5071 (TTY 711) or visit www.fallschurchva.gov.

Related Links:

American Chemistry Council - EWG Report May Create Unwarranted Concerns:
www.fallschurchva.gov/documents/ACC_DCDrinkingWaterStmt071907.pdf

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies - EWG Stokes Unfounded Fears of D.C. Tap Water:
www.amwa.net/cs/news_releases/amwa_news_release_july_19_2007

Environmental Science & Technology Disinfection Byproduct Paper:
http://pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/esthag-w/2005/sep/science/rr_DBPs.html

EPA Drinking Water Disinfection Byproduct Paper:
<http://awwarf.org/research/TopicsandProjects/execSum/PDFReports/91088F.pdf>